

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 16, 2014

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

As you know, veterans utilizing the Fayetteville VA Medical Center (VAMC) experience some of the longest patient wait times in the country. Data released by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in June revealed that 17 percent of the veterans at the Fayetteville VAMC waited more than 30 days for an appointment, by far the highest percentage in the country. A month later, average wait times for an appointment have only gotten worse. Currently 27 percent of Fayetteville VAMC veterans wait more than 30 days to see a doctor, while no other VAMC faces rates above 20 percent. This is unacceptable.

Recognizing the severity of the problem, Acting VA Secretary Sloan Gibson visited Fayetteville in early June. One of the key takeaways from his visit was the need for more space for providers to see patients. Last year alone, 9,000 veterans accessed care through the Fayetteville VAMC for the first time. Secretary Gibson directed the Fayetteville leadership to submit proposals to lease additional space and said he would expedite review of those proposals.

Following up on Acting Secretary Gibson's visit, I met with leadership and staff at the Fayetteville VAMC and learned they vetted and submitted two proposals for additional space, one in Fayetteville and the other in Jacksonville, North Carolina. These leases could be executed immediately and would cost less than \$300,000 a year, a level that does not require approval by Congress or the VA Secretary. Both facilities would provide space for three providers and their teams. The office at Jacksonville could begin seeing patients within two weeks of approval of the lease, and after modest renovations, Fayetteville could follow two months later.

However, actions by the General Services Administration (GSA) have caused the VA to suspend approval of all new leases. Since 1983, the GSA has delegated leasing authority to the VA for medical facility leases, and as recently as two months ago, the VA could have approved these projects immediately without GSA's involvement. Debate about whether large leases should be considered operating or capital leases, along with concern over visibility of leases by other agencies using their authority, led GSA to halt all VA leases.

Unfortunately, even critical short-term leases like those proposed for Fayetteville and Jacksonville are stalled while the GSA and VA work on a solution that may take weeks or months to implement. Bureaucratic delays should not prevent our veterans from receiving the care they have earned through their sacrifice, and we need immediate action to approve these leases so the VA has the capacity to meet the health care needs of veterans in the Fayetteville area.

I understand that resolving the problems with health care delivery at VA Medical Centers across the country is a top priority for the Administration, and as such the entire executive branch should be working together to take all necessary steps without delay. This is a problem that demands action and needs to be addressed now, not months from now. I ask that you instruct the GSA Administrator and Acting VA Secretary to immediately work with the Fayetteville VAMC to resolve any outstanding issues and approve the Fayetteville and Jacksonville leases.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kay R. Hagan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Kay R. Hagan  
United States Senator